

Storing Sugars



Sugars are simple carbohydrates that provide an excellent source of calories for energy. Sugars also add the sweet taste to many of our most delicious foods. Sugar can be stored in dry form (crystals) or in a liquid form (syrup – including maple syrup). Sugar from beets or sugarcane (sucrose), corn (dextrose), and honey (fructose) are most commonly used for long term food storage.

Quality & Purchase

Pure cane or beet granulated sucrose stores the best. Purchase top quality refined sugar from trusted commercial sources. Raw sugars and honey are less “pure” and will have a shorter shelf life. Commercial, filtered liquid honey will last the longest in storage. Select filtered, top quality syrups or honey for storage. Comb honey, unfiltered honey, or raw sugar syrups do not store well. Brown sugars have natural moisture and do not store as well for long term storage.

Packaging

Storage containers should be opaque, airtight, and moisture/ odor-proof. The typical retail paper package for crystal sugars is not suitable for long term storage. Polyethylene bags, Mylar-type bags, food-grade plastic buckets, glass canning jars, and #10 cans are all suitable for dry sugar storage. Glass canning jars and #10 cans work best for liquid syrups and honey. Removing oxygen for long term sugar and honey storage is not required and not recommended. Honey is slightly acidic. It will cause rust in metal containers or on metal lids. Always use lined, food-grade metal containers or lids when storing any food, including honey.

Storage Conditions

Store sugar in a cool, dry location (not the refrigerator). Moisture makes granulated sugar hard and lumpy. Once this happens, it creates problems in usage and there is no easy method to restore lumpy sugar. Always store all sugars in an odor free area. Sugar can absorb strong odors – even through plastic packaging. Sugar syrups should not be allowed to get too hot or freeze – this will encourage crystallization. Heat will also darken color and alter flavor in sugar syrups and honey.

Nutrition & Allergies

Sugars have approximately 15-20 calories per teaspoon all in carbohydrates. They will have no fat, cholesterol, fiber, vitamins, etc.

Shelf life

Commercial sugars (granular, syrup, and honey) have an indefinite shelf life due to their resistance to microbial growth. However, sugars have a best-if-used by date of approximately 2 years for quality concerns. This is due to lumpiness or hardening in granulated sugars and crystallization of sugars in honey and syrup. It is still safe to use even when lumpy or crystals are present. The color and flavor of liquid sugars may change over time.

To see a more detailed article on the shelf life of sugars and how to store them see [Shelf Life of Sugar: Do Sugars Go Bad & How to Store Them](#)

Use from storage

Once opened some syrups may allow mold growth. Honey and granulated sugar will not. If granulated sugar is lumpy or hard chop lumps in a food processor. If crystallization occurs in syrups or honey, re-liquify them by placing the container in a larger container of hot water until the crystals have dissolved.

There are some that advocate use of honey as a topical antibacterial agent. It does have antibacterial properties, but it also has properties that could promote bacterial infections (food source and presence of spore forming bacteria).

References

- Molan PC. The antibacterial activity of honey. 1.
- The nature of the antibacterial activity. *Bee World* 1992; 73(1): 5-28.

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